

Integrated wellness

The Professionals' Perspective

by Jacqueline Le Sueur

The SpaAsia Wellness Summit 2006 in Hua Hin, Thailand last month brought together professionals from many areas of wellness in Asia Pacific. Hoteliers and spa consultants rubbed shoulders with specialists in complementary medicine. Members of the scientific and medical communities mingled with leading figures in the development of spas in the region. There were also several people in the audience who owe their current well-being to the integration of allopathic and alternative medicine.

The final day of the Summit was dedicated to 'Integrated Wellness'. But what exactly is integrated wellness? The dictionary defines the words independently of one another...

'integrate' (vb)

- to bring together or unite previously segregated parts into a whole.

'wellness' (n)

- the quality or state of being healthy, especially as the result of deliberate effort
- an approach to healthcare that emphasizes preventing illness and prolonging life, as opposed to emphasizing and treating disease.

Clear and concise. But how do we incorporate integrated wellness into our lives, and what relevance does it have to the hotel/resort, spa and medical industries? I asked professionals from all sides of the debate to share their views from their differing perspectives.



THE HOTELIER – MARY DARLING

Mary graduated recently from a fifteen-year career with Marriott Inc and four years with Mandara Spa Asia to positions as an Executive member of the Bali Spa & Wellness Association and vice-chairperson of the Asia-Pacific Spa Council. I asked her to define integrated wellness and to outline the role she saw it playing in the hotel and resort industry.

"Wellness is being fit and healthy; balanced in mind, body and spirit or soul. Integrated wellness is merging aspects of the above into daily life – whether it be into a corporation, school, hotel, restaurant, hospital, or I suppose any place where I am me. And I would say that there may be varying degrees of this integration as well.

The role of integrated wellness in hotels and resorts, now and in the future, will be the ongoing creation of an environment where guests can achieve wellness as defined above. In a hospital, for example, offer popular fast food in your lobby if you must, but also offer healthy alternatives. Likewise, prescribe drugs as necessary but also include a prescription for a massage.

Hotels, resorts and spas could focus more on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Water, Air, Activity, Sleep, Eat, and Temperature) in their environments, as well as engaging the five senses, in order to integrate more wellness into their businesses and the services they provide for their guests. They could do this by looking at the quality of air on their premises by introducing, where possible, more open air spaces and by ensuring the air in these spaces is clean and not just for the crowd that smokes. They can look at the water they use – either for drinking or in pools and Jacuzzis. With respect to activities, yes, offer the usual yoga etc. but introduce kids' yoga, or educational experiences that expose and de-mystify the wellness world. Regarding sleep, mattress comfort can be looked at, methods to overcome jet lag offered and laundry can be done in an environmentally-sensitive way. Last but not least is food. This can be improved by making healthier options more widely available and providing better nutritional guidelines that allow the guest to make an informed choice. This really does not need to be hard once the basics are in place."

THE SPA CONSULTANTS – ANDREW JACKA

Andrew is a director of Howarth Spa Consulting in Bangkok. He is also vice president of the Thai Spa Association. I asked him to share his definitions of wellness and integrated wellness, and for his comments on the role wellness has to play in the development and growth of spas in general and in the near future. I also asked him to identify its position in hospitals.

"Wellness is the state of total health where the mind and spirit is in balance with the body. Preferably this is achieved in as natural a manner as possible utilising complementary health practices if necessary.

Integrated wellness is where wellness is achieved through a combination of Allopathic and Complementary/Holistic/Traditional means, and where wellness is seen as an important part of our daily regime, not something to be considered occasionally.

As the modern spa industry continues to mature, the role of wellness within this is steadily becoming the focus. In the past, spas focused on pampering the affluent in a luxurious environment, and hospitals focused on the industry of sickness, but this is all changing and there is now a huge gap that is starting to be filled where health options are being considered in a preventative manner; to promote well-being and prevent dis-ease long before the body becomes sick: The state of wellness. Spas are seeing also that there is a large untapped market to be explored where holistic health practices, therapies and treatments can be incorporated into the spa environment in a complementary manner and without compromising their existing market positioning, and yet be able to expand their market potential into a greater health promotion or anti-ageing role.

There will always be room for the medium and high-end luxury spas, but as we grow older and seek more from life. So we are seeking more from our spa experiences. However caution must be exercised, as spas cannot be "all things to all people" and must draw the line for the limit of their expertise at some stage in the not too distant future.



The incorporation of the spa experience into the hospital experience can only be as a supportive role until the allopathic medical fraternity realize that there is more to health and well-being than just treating the 'sick'. If spas continue to treat the 'well' we could co-exist in harmony, but with substantial sums of money involved in both fields, and with greed being an inextricable part of human nature this is never likely to be achieved on a broad spectrum. Retreats, Destination Spas, Medi-Spas, and full-blown Medical Spas can all play a role in this 'middle ground', but they will remain niche market businesses rather than mainstream businesses, for a long time to come."



ANDREW GIBSON

Previously the Managing Director of Six Senses Spas, Andrew is now a partner in Raison d'Être. He has experience all over the world in almost every aspect of the management, construction and development of health clubs and spas.

"Wellness as I see it is the measurement of a state. It is a measure of physical condition, mental health and spiritual harmony. These three factors, integrated, describe the level of wellness a person enjoys. Wellness can also apply to a group of individuals as well as an entire society.

I believe that this definition allows for a broad scope of wellness that involves all branches of the medical profession, religion, beauty and fitness. and just about any leisure activity one can think of. The definition is vague and can be open to many interpretations that all indicate a positive feeling. Wellness signifies the achievement of something which is better than just adequate and it is more than simply the absence of something bad.

It is therefore not surprising that wellness has become the catchword in marketing of many industries. It is used to convince us that products and services will improve our quality of life. Hence the adoption of the word wellness by industries as varied as medical, beauty, leisure, fitness, tourism, hotel and spa and so on.

Spas fit into the need to recharge in the name of wellness and offer an escape into a unique opportunity to relax, refresh and rejuvenate. They provide protection from interruption and disturbance and offer relaxing, replenishing or energizing treatments, followed by refreshment that completes the experience. Additionally, people seek activities that will improve their wellness. Any spa that is perceived to provide such activities should succeed. These activities can be varied, ranging from pampering to body and mind altering programmes.

As the spa industry evolves and adopts different wellness strategies it will split into such specialist areas as preventative medispas, spiritual healing centres, nutritional counselling centres and the inevitable all-natural beauty centre. This split will be driven by specialization, regulation and licensing.



Hotels have invested a lot of money to change their names to include the word 'spa.' I can see hospitals going the same way by changing their names to include the words 'wellness centre.' I think the two are compatible. You can have a spa in a wellness centre or a wellness centre attached to your spa. The two will continue to walk hand in hand."

**THE SPA DEVELOPERS AND MANAGERS
TRENT MUNDAY**

Trent is Managing Director of Mandara Spa where he manages and develops their existing business and sets the future strategic direction for the company. In his own words, he is committed to pampering,

"Wellness equals feeling good & being good. To me, this does not need to include any higher level of meditation or spiritual enlightenment. It is, quite simply, what it says. Who's to say that I can't feel good simply by taking a walk on the beach or having a little pampering massage down at a Spa? Could I achieve even greater levels of wellness if I was to meditate, do yoga, etc? Maybe. But I just don't believe that I must do any of this to achieve a state of wellness. People are different and wellness to you may actually be different to what I define as wellness.

Personally, I believe that as the industry heads down a track of total wellness we are forgetting that wellness can be achieved through pampering. Let's face it. The human body is a great machine that is able to handle just about anything we throw at it. If we are able to get out of the way and let our body do its thing, a total wellness state can probably be achieved. How better to help us get out of the way than by being relaxed, soothed and pampered?"

IAN BREWIS

As Director of Group Spa Development & Operations for Shangri-La Hotels and Resorts, Ian is responsible for the development and implementation of CHI, Shangri-La's award-winning spa brand. Again, I looked for Ian to define wellness and to share his thoughts on the role it has to play in the spa business in years to come.

"There are many quotes on the meaning of wellness, encompassing a very broad subject. Basically we all want to be well and we wish the same for others. Life often works against this wish, whether in part through our own actions or 'happen-stance'.

People are recognising more and more that spas can be a positive part of their lives in providing the personal space and contact that individuals often need to restore wellness – physically and emotionally.

Spas are now viewed as 'mainstream', moving from being regarded as 'alternative' through 'complementary' to now being 'integrated' into mainstream health and well-being. It is a wonderful and ongoing development that we now have spas that offer specialist environments that focus on specific areas of wellness.

Spas, in a hotel and resort context, are very much part of this bigger picture and provide guests an opportunity to relax, restore, escape, revitalize and all the other words that define what assist us to achieve a sense of wellness."

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– IAN BREWIS



INGO SCHWEDER

With over 20 years experience running luxury hotels and spas, Ingo is responsible for the worldwide design, development and operation of Mandarin Oriental Hotel Group's (MOHG) existing wellness and leisure facilities as well as those under construction. Ingo explains MOHG's philosophy and beliefs with respect to wellness and how his organisation embraces these in their spas.

"Mandarin Oriental defines wellness as a lifestyle that focuses on physical and mental well-being. The Group's spas support this belief through the innovative creation of exemplary treatment processes, physical activities with emphasis on mindful forms of exercise and lifestyle counselling according to various disciplines such as nutrition.

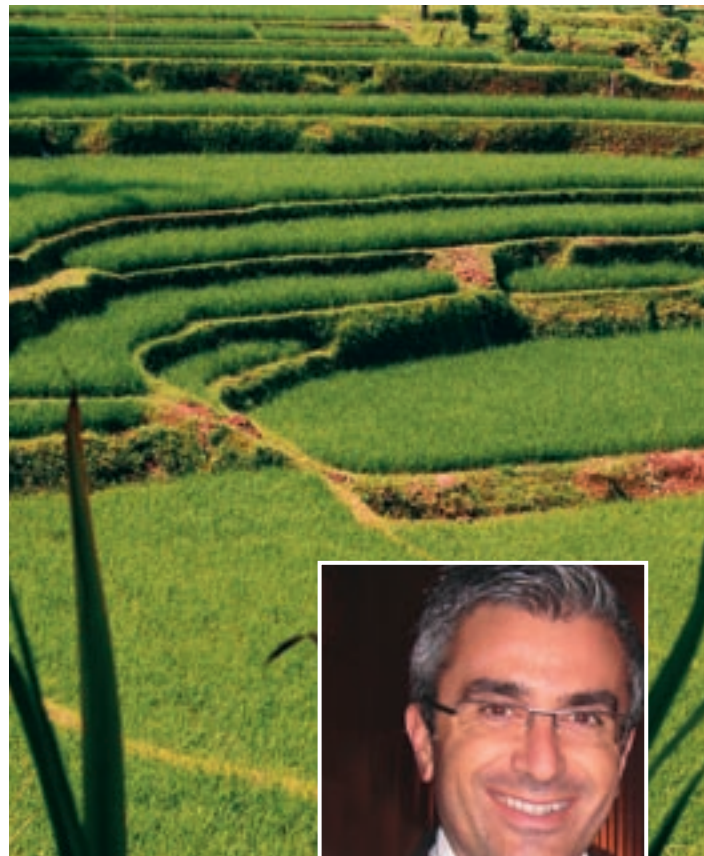
We incorporate spa experiences that revel in the vitality of water reflecting the spirit of the original definition of spa (*salus per aqua*). Opportunities for social participation and space for personal contemplation walk hand in hand with high energy fitness schemes and specialty programmes on all aspects of well-being. We set superior standards of training and enthusiasm for wellness education in all our staff and through this we offer our guests therapies that 'touch' both emotionally and physically. Our spas are meditative environments that contrast with the outside world and are a celebration of oriental culture."

HARRY APOSTOLIDES

Harry has been General Manager of COMO Shambala Estate at Begawan Giri and Uma Ubud since 2005. He is responsible for the operations of both resorts. I asked him not only for his definition of wellness, but also to explain how a therapeutic approach can be integrated into a spa and wellness retreat.

"For me, wellness must encompass a way of life that nurtures mind, body and soul. It is not about short term solutions to immediate problems nor is it reacting to aches, pains, moods swings or poor health. Wellness implies an understanding of one's body and health and to proactively adopt behaviours which prolong health and can lead to the extension of a person's lifespan.

COMO Shambhala Estate is not a destination spa; it is a wellness retreat. As such, we go beyond treatments that are purely pamper. There is nothing wrong with pampering but we want to create an environment that encourages longer term betterment of health and the sense of well-being.



We help to kick-start a wellness regime by challenging guests to be active and to move; to circulate blood, oxygen and energy throughout the body. Guests achieve this by participating in yoga classes, Pilates, treks and bike rides, to name but a few. We provide advice through our team of qualified and experienced consultants, who offer guidance that can lead to changes in behaviour and habits, which can have long lasting effects. We also nurture the body through a healthy, yet delicious array of organic foods.

Our property is designed to encourage social interaction between like-minded individuals who are seeking the same goals. And being situated in Bali, one's soul cannot help but feel uplifted by observing the natural settings and the Balinese way of life."



**THE HOSPITAL MARKETING DIRECTOR
RUBEN TORAL**

Ruben is one of the world's leading authorities on medical tourism. As Group Marketing Director for Bumrungrad International in Bangkok, he has been a driving force behind the hospital's position as the world's leading medical tourism destination. He shares his personal perspective on wellness and its integration in hospitals and spas.

"I am no authority on integrated wellness. My own point of view, however, is that integrated wellness incorporates three things: personal choice and responsibility to 'be well' (I want to be well); a commitment to learning and effective personal management (I want to learn more about wellness and put wellness into my daily life by exercising, eating right, meditating, etc); and lastly a place where complementary

modalities of healthcare exist and are delivered in a synchronized way (When I feel unwell I want to go to a place where practitioners and educators from the allopathic, Ayurvedic, homeopathic and naturopathic worlds work together so that I can get well again).

Integrated wellness has yet to gain traction because most people in this world do not manage their wellness, but rather their illness. Today's world values speed, comfort and convenience above all things and a holistic, integrated approach to wellness simply requires too much effort. Traditional allopathic medical centres are slow to embrace alternative modalities of care because medical doctors are not trained and therefore do not understand them, and in most parts of the world alternative therapies are not covered by insurance or employers' health benefit schemes.

Integrated wellness is like an Apple computer, looks good and operates like a charm, but it has only 5% of the market because it is more expensive and is not positioned for the mass market.

The growth and development opportunities for integrated wellness are many and like everything it's all about product, positioning and timing. Again, I will use Apple computers as an example. Since its inception, Apple has stuck with an architecture and operating system that was proprietary which meant Apple computers could not effectively run Windows and hence was unable to gain a foothold in the mass market. Earlier this year, Apple decided to use an Intel chip which effectively made it easier to use Windows programmes on Apple products, and in doing so made its product more accessible to a mass market. Apple didn't change their design or philosophy, they just tweaked their product to reach a bigger audience that would consider Apple if it were more 'friendly' to a Windows environment.

The same applies to wellness – it has to get out of the box it is in and make itself relevant to people in their everyday lives. Wellness is a lifestyle and that is where the industry needs to position itself – not as a fringe or a luxury product, but as the smart choice to look younger, feel better and live longer...my holy trinity."



**THE COMPLEMENTARY
MEDICINE SPECIALISTS
DR JOHN BRAZIER**

Founder of the Oriental Body Balance System, John is a Doctor of Traditional Chinese Medicine and a practitioner of Oriental Medicine and Western complementary medicine systems. He is also a lecturer and trainer of both the general public and medically trained personnel. He shares with us a definition of wellness, as well

as ways in which he feels it influences spas, hospitals and the corporate world from the perspective of a professional practising in the UK.

“Integrated wellness or medi-spa can infer the use of machines, Western doctors, practitioners trained in both Eastern & Western hands-on therapy and many more things. All of these areas of integration will offer a large growth potential because different areas of society are creating a demand that the different businesses will pick up on and find a way to service.

One of the major drives to integration is the education of the general public in their own health and well-being. In the UK you cannot pick up a newspaper or magazine that doesn't have some advice about how to keep well or recover from illness detailing the traditional Eastern approach or what therapists or therapies can help your skin condition or bad back etc. This has led to a need for multi-trained therapists or clinics that offer a large variety of treatments.

Hospitals in the UK are now beginning to recognize the accelerated recovery benefits of using complementary medicine within their environments. However the Western educated doctors seem very hesitant to accept its potential, even though nursing staff seem to fully support and encourage any form of help.

The real progress of integrated wellness seems to be in the Asian hospital and spa market. Again this market is driven by clients' needs. If a client visits a hospital in the West they will generally only receive a Western diagnosis, Western drug therapy, surgery and if any rehabilitation it will be Western based. I took a friend to China who was

suffering from bowel cancer. Our first meeting was with 8 specialists including a doctor of Immunotherapy whose job it was to provide the correct nutrition to fight the side effects of chemotherapy and a doctor of Traditional Chinese Medicine whose job it was to evaluate the state of the internal organs and energy system to enhance recovery. Integration in action!

The corporate world has finally woken up to the fact that a healthy employee is a productive employee. Latest research suggests that for every \$1 invested in an employee's health and well-being the company gets back \$4 in increased performance and productivity and a reduction in absenteeism. As a result, more and more companies are offering complementary therapy in the workplace to their staff”
(See also In-Company Therapy by Jacqueline Le Sueur on pages 172-173 of this issue)

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DR SUNDARDAS D ANNAMALAY

Dr Sundardas is a practising naturopathic physician. He is a Professor of Naturopathic Medicine at Youngson Institute of Natural Science in Australia, a member of the American Academy of Anti-Ageing Medicine and a Fellow of the Faculty, University of Natural Medicine (Nevada). He runs a busy practice in Singapore specialising in the management of chronic health conditions. I asked him for his therapeutic views on integrated wellness from a naturopathic perspective.

“A wellness revolution is in full swing, brought on by people who care deeply about their health and well-being and want to achieve a longer life, increased vitality and a lifestyle of well-being. Wellness is balance

of mind, body and spirit and is demonstrated by an absence of disease, a presence of High Life Force, excellent strength, vigour and vitality, and enthusiasm at work and play.

The healing strength of nature is powerful. Using a naturopathic approach, the cause of dis-ease is treated rather than its effect. By employing safe and effective natural therapies, naturopathic physicians are committed to the principle of causing no harm to the patient as they work towards achieving a state of wellness. The individual is viewed as a whole, composed of a complex interaction of physical, mental/emotional, spiritual, social, and other factors. This integrated perspective results in a therapeutic approach in which no disease is automatically seen as incurable. Wellness can be attained by all.

Naturopathic physicians are first and foremost teachers who educate, empower, and motivate the patient to assume more personal responsibility for his or her health by adopting a healthy attitude, lifestyle, and diet. We are also preventive medicine specialists. Prevention of disease and wellness are accomplished through education and through living a lifestyle that supports health.”



PROF MARC COHEN

Marc is the Founding Professor of Complementary Medicine at RMIT University, President of the Australasian Integrative Medicine Association and the past Founding Director of the Centre for Complementary Medicine at Monash University. He has a medical degree, another in physiology and psychological medicine, a PhD in Traditional Chinese Medicine and a second PhD in electrical engineering. He researches complementary

medicine, teaches Nutrition Medicine and Medical Acupuncture and is currently developing a degree programme specifically designed to train wellness practitioners to work in the spa industry. As an expert academic in the field of integrated medicine, Marc shares his view of integrated wellness.

“Wellness is not a product you can buy or sell. . . It is a way of relating to the world. Wellness is about raising consciousness. It is about love, connection, health, pleasure and longevity.

In a stable healthcare system the dollars spent on wellness activities would far exceed those spent on acute and intensive care. The present position is the reverse, however, with minimal amounts being spent on wellness. With the current crisis in healthcare – an ageing population, increasing healthcare costs, increasing exposure to pollution and toxic chemicals, environmental destruction, an epidemic of obesity, diabetes, heart disease, cancer – this cannot continue. If it does, our healthcare systems will topple over. As western medical practice stands at the moment, it is considered normal for doctors to treat coronary heart disease by stripping a vein from the leg, opening the chest, placing the vein across a blocked artery and then repeating the procedure every ten years. It is considered abnormal however to prescribe relaxation, exercise, eating good food and sharing feelings, despite the fact that research has proven the success of this approach.

There are a number of activities we must all do in order to stay alive. We must all manage stress, move, eat, relate to other people and world and learn. How well we do these will determine our level of well-being; and basic wellness activities therefore include Stress Management, Exercise, Nutrition, Social / Spiritual interaction and Education (SENSE). Let us look at the effect of meditation on our wellness, for example. An audit of 600,000 non-meditators compared with 2,000 meditators showed an 87% reduction in heart disease, a 55% reduction in tumours and 63% reduction in all overall healthcare costs over 11 years in those who meditate. This is a pretty strong argument for integrating this aspect of wellness into our daily lives and our healthcare systems.

Centuries ago Hippocrates said, ‘Let food be thy medicine and medicine be thy food.’ Short, sweet and very accurate. We are what we eat. Good nutrition is vital to our health and our wellness. Ideally the food we eat should be ‘SLOW’ which stands for Seasonal, Local, Organic, and Whole. Additionally, the integration of functional foods which include dietary components that have health benefit beyond basic nutrition and ‘superfoods’ which have naturally high levels of health enhancing nutrients, can assist in improving well-being and/or reducing the risk of disease.

Social interaction is also a vital element in maintaining well-being. A law of the emotions says that if we share pain it decreases and if we share joy it increases. A lack of social connection has been identified

“Wellness is balance and synchronicity in all aspects of existence. Being able to experience our own true nature.”

as being as important in contributing to heart disease as smoking, high cholesterol and high blood pressure and one of the most powerful ways to become happier is to increase your social contacts. We all need people in our lives with whom we can share our thoughts and feelings, whether that be a good friend, family member or therapist. Touch is also vitally important. We all have the basic need to be touched yet we live in a relatively low touch society where most people suffer from 'skin hunger'. The importance of touch has been highlighted in an animal study that found that rabbits that were petted and talked to were protected from developing heart disease despite being fed a high cholesterol diet.

Integrated wellness implies that these healthy life activities are part of everyday life and ideally integrated into the fabric of society so that wellness is achieved through the act of everyday living and we constantly live in the present with a high level of conscious awareness about ourselves and our relationships with the world.”

THE PATIENT

Last, but most certainly not least, let us consider the definition of wellness provided by a Summit delegate who is walking the long road to wellness from illness caused by a serious, life-changing accident many years ago.

“Wellness is balance and synchronicity in all aspects of existence. Being able to experience our own true nature. A state of awareness and realization of oneness with the totality of energy which is our universe, our world and ourselves. It is all about connecting with and realizing our full potential in life.”

From two small words, so many different perspectives. Everyone I spoke to agreed on two things, however...we need to seek wellness mentally, emotionally, spiritually and physically in order to be truly healthy, and responsibility for our wellness lies only with ourselves, no matter the path we choose to take. **sa**

